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data payload directed to a second base station;

determining whether the data payload will be used based on information retrieved from a signaling line corresponding to the link; and

forwarding the data payload of the packet if the data payload will be used and not forwarding the entire data payload of the packet if the data payload will not be used.

5. (Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein determining whether the data payload will be decoded comprises determining based on information retrieved from a header of the packet.

6. (Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein determining whether the data payload will be decoded is performed before forwarding any part of the packet.

9. A method of forwarding signals over a cellular link, comprising:
receiving, at a first base station of a cellular fixed network, a packet of signals having a data payload directed to a second base station;
determining whether the data payload will be used by the second based station, after forwarding at least part of the packet; and
forwarding the data payload of the packet if the data payload will be used and not forwarding the entire data payload of the packet if the data payload will not be used.

10. (Amended) A method according to claim 9, wherein not forwarding the entire payload of the packet if the data payload will not be used comprises forwarding less than the entire payload of the packet.

11. (Amended) A method according to claim 10, wherein forwarding less than the entire payload of the packet comprises forwarding only a header of the packet.

12. (Amended) A method according to claim 11, wherein forwarding the payload of the packet comprises forwarding through a tunnel used by a plurality of connections.

13. (Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein not forwarding the entire payload of the packet if the data payload will not be used comprises not forwarding any of the packet.

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9. 15. (Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein forwarding the payload of the packet comprises forwarding the packet along with a connection indication field.

9 4 19. 16. (Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein forwarding the payload of the packet comprises forwarding through a tunnel used by a number of connections greater than the number of channels in the tunnel.

19. (Amended) A method of forwarding signals over a link between base stations, comprising:

a5 receiving, at a first base station of a cellular fixed network, a plurality of packets;
determining for each packet whether the data payload of the packet will be used based on information retrieved from control bits of a header of the packet; and
forwarding the payload of at least one of the packets and not forwarding the entire payload of at least one of the packets, according to the determination.

22. 23. (Amended) Apparatus for compressing packets being forwarded over a link between base stations, comprising:

a6 an input interface which receives packets having a data payload;
a processor which determines whether the data payload carries meaningful information and will be decoded by a remote base station; and
an output interface which forwards the payload of the packet if the data payload carries meaningful information and will be decoded by the remote station and does not forward the entire packet if the data payload does not carry meaningful information.

a7 32. (Amended) A system for forwarding packets from and to mobile units, comprising:
a base transmission station which generates a stream of packets each having an encoded data payload;
a compression unit which determines whether the encoded data payload carries meaningful information, forwards the payload of packets which carry meaningful information and does not forward the entire payload of packets which do not carry meaningful information; and
a base station controller which receives the forwarded packets and generates replacement packets for packets whose payload was not forwarded in their entirety.